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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS
AND INTERFERENCES

Ex parte JAMES CLOUGH and DARREL CHERRY

Appeal 2008-2548
Application 10/004,173
Technology Center 2600

Decided: September 2, 2008

Before KENNETH W. HAIRSTON, ROBERT E. NAPPI,
and JOHN A. JEFFERY, *Administrative Patent Judges*.

NAPPI, *Administrative Patent Judge*.

DECISION ON APPEAL

This is a decision on appeal under 35 U.S.C. § 6(b) of the final rejection of claims 1 through 18.

We affirm the Examiner's rejections of these claims.

INVENTION

The invention is directed towards a system for authenticating printer users. The system makes use of a print server which downloads printer drivers to the user's computers. The print server also provides an authentication code to the user's computer and checks the print jobs to verify that the authentication code is attached to the print job. See page 1 of Appellants' Specification. Claim 1 is representative of the invention and reproduced below:

1. A print server, for processing a print job sent by a workstation, the print server comprising:
 - a printer set-up module to provide a print driver for installation on the workstation; and
 - an authentication module to supply an authentication code to the workstation, and to review the print job sent by the workstation to determine validity of a copy of the authentication code attached to the print job.

REFERENCES

DeBry	US 6,385,728 B1	May 7, 2002 (filed Nov. 26, 1997)
Barnard	US 2003/0005097 A1	Jan. 2, 2003 (filed Jun. 28, 2001)

REJECTION AT ISSUE

Claims 1 through 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Barnard and DeBry. The Examiner's rejection is on pages 3 through 8 of the Answer.

Throughout the opinion, we make reference to the Brief (received January 22, 2007), Reply Brief (received August 15, 2007) and the Answer (mailed June 15, 2007) for the respective details thereof.

ISSUES

Appellants argue on pages 7 and 8 of the Brief that the Examiner's rejection of claims 1 through 5 is in error. Appellants assert that the Examiner's rejection is in error as the combination of Barnard and DeBry does not teach or suggest "an authentication module to supply an authentication code to the workstation, and to review the print job sent by the workstation to determine validity of a copy of the authentication code attached to the print job" as recited in claim 1. On pages 8 and 9 of the Brief, Appellants present similar arguments directed to claims 6 through 9. On pages 10 and 11 of the Brief, Appellants present similar arguments directed to claims 10 through 12. On pages 11 and 12 of the Brief, Appellants present similar arguments directed to claims 13 through 17. On page 13 of the Brief, Appellants present similar arguments directed to claim 18.

Thus, for each of the independent claims, and their dependent claims, Appellants' contentions present us with the issue of whether the Examiner erred in finding that the combination Barnard and DeBry teaches a print server with an authentication module which supplies an authentication code to a workstation and that the module reviews a print job from the workstation to determine the validity of a copy of the authentication code attached to the print job as claimed.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Barnard teaches a print queue manager for a network. Abstract.
2. One of the functions of Barnard's print queue manager is to provide and install printer drivers on workstations connected to the network. Para. 0064.

3. DeBry teaches a system for a guaranteeing authorization for a printer to retrieve a file from a file server. The system allows the user of a terminal to request that a document located at a document source be printed by a print server. The user's terminal does not actually load the document, but obtains a "will-call" certificate from the document source. The user then sends the will-call certificate to a secure print server. The print server presents the will-call certificate to the print server which provides the document to the printer. Thus, the document is transmitted from the source to the printer without being loaded on the user's terminal. Abstract, col. 5, l. 50- col. 6, ll. 28
4. DeBry also teaches that the print request can be used to control access to the printer server. In one embodiment, the user sends a public key to the print server which the print server validates via a certificate authority. Col. 9, ll. 15-22.
5. Once the user's public key is known the print server sends to the user a random message. The user encrypts this random message using the private key and sends it back to the printer. The printer uses the user's private key to decode the random message to see if it matches the random message sent, and, if it does, the user is authenticated. DeBry, col. 9, ll. 23-27.

ANALYSIS

Initially, we note that Appellants' Brief separately addresses each independent claim and groups the dependent claims with the respective independent claim. As such, we select independent claims 1, 6, 10, 13, and 18 to be representative claims of each group.

Claims 1 through 5.

Appellants' arguments have not persuaded us that the Examiner erred in finding that the combination Barnard and DeBry teach a print server with an authentication module which supplies an authentication code to a workstation and that the module reviews a print job from the workstation to determine the validity of a copy of the authentication code attached to the print job. Claim 1 recites that the print sever includes a module which supplies an authentication code to a work station and also reviews the print job to determine the validity of a copy of the authentication code.

The Examiner, in rejecting claim 1, refers to DeBry's teachings in column 9 of authenticating the printer and also to DeBry's teachings of the will-call certificate to meet this claim. Ans, 4, 8. Appellants argue on pages 2 and 3 of the Reply Brief, the will-call certificate is not provided to the user's workstation by the print server and, as such, is not the same as the claimed authentication code. We concur with Appellants' argument, and find that the will-call certificate is generated by the document source which is separate from the print server. Fact 3. However, we find that DeBry teaches that the print server provides a random number to the user which is then returned to the print server. This number is used to authenticate the user. Fact 5. Since this number is provided to the printer as part of a user requesting an access to print a document, it is considered to be part of a print job. Thus, we consider DeBry's random number, which is sent from the print server to the terminal and is sent by the terminal to the print server in conjunction with a print request, to meet the claimed authentication code. Accordingly, Appellants' arguments have not persuaded us of error in the Examiner's rejection of claims 1 through 5.

Claims 6 through 17

Appellants' arguments directed to claims 6 through 9, 10 through 12 and 13 through 17 present the same issue as discussed with respect to claim 1. Claims 6, 10 and 13 are slightly different from claim 1. These independent claims each recite downloading an authentication code from a print server, sending a print job to the print server containing the authentication code and verifying the validity of the authentication code. As discussed above with respect to claim 1, we find that the random message generated by the print server in DeBry's system is used in this manner. Thus, Appellants' arguments have not persuaded us of error in the Examiner's rejection of the three groups of claims: (1) Group 1, claims 6 through 9; (2) Group 2, claims 10 through 12; and (3) Group 3, claims 13 through 17.

Claim 18

Appellants' arguments directed to claim 18 present the same issue as discussed with respect to claim 1. Claim 18 is similar to claim 1 in that it recites a module in a print server for supplying an authentication code and the module reviews the print job request to determine the validity of the authentication code attached to the print job. As discussed above with respect to claim 1, we find that the random message generated by the print server in DeBry's system is used in this manner. Thus, Appellants' arguments have not persuaded us of error in the Examiner's rejection of claim 18.

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ORDER

The decision of the Examiner is affirmed.

No time period for taking any subsequent action in connection with this appeal may be extended under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a)(1)(iv).

AFFIRMED

KIS

HEWLETT PACKARD COMPANY
Intellectual Property Administration
P. O. Box 272400
Fort Collins, CO 80527-2400